Michigan Supreme Court
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To: Trial Courts

From: Glen Hyatt, Deputy Director, Judicial Information Systems

Re: Update on Next Generation of Trial Court Case Management System

Many activities have been taking place with respect to the Next Generation of the Trial Court Case Management System over the last few months. I would like to take a moment to update you on the project.

Next Generation Judicial Information System (NGJIS)

Background

The Next Generation Project started in 2005 when the State Court Administrator and Judicial Information Systems began to examine the long-term future of the JIS systems.   Since nearly 75 percent of Michigan's trial courts currently use JIS' systems to run their courts, it is imperative that the systems meet current and future needs of the trial courts. While the existing systems have worked well for nearly 30 years, they are written in COBOL and do not take advantage of recent innovations in technology. The current systems require each court maintain an AS/400 to run the programs and require that semi-annual updates from JIS must be done manually by each court.   There are also inefficiencies in JIS's ability to maintain the systems.

By contrast, modern technology tools and the Judicial Network make it possible to have a centralized system that JIS can design, support, and provide statewide, and a new system could integrate all court functions into one application. Updates would be made more quickly and easily, and the system would provide better business features and reporting tools. The adaptability of the new system would also allow JIS to more efficiently respond to legislative requirements and changes to courts' needs.

Recognizing a need to update the systems, SCAO and JIS began exploring the possible options in 2005.   Two options were identified: license a commercial case management system modified for Michigan court requirements or partner with a vendor to build a new system specifically designed for Michigan courts.

A formal evaluation team, which included trial court judges, administrators, and technical staff, assessed both options, attended demonstrations from Unisys, IBM, Compuware, and Tyler Technologies. Unisys, IBM and Compuware each had prior experience with court technology and presented proposals for building new case management systems designed for Michigan. Tyler Technologies presented its commercial product, Odyssey, which was the only existing commercial case management system that met JIS' technical requirements. Over 30 people participated in the various presentations and provided feedback to JIS. The evaluation team overwhelmingly chose Unisys as a partner to assist JIS with the design and build of the new case management system. The primary selling point was Unisys' investment in and development of an Integrated Court Management System for Western Australia Courts. This system will serve as the foundation for Michigan's custom-designed product and the evaluation team felt that this provided a good solution since the custom system would not be starting from scratch. The other strong selling point was the fact that the Michigan judicial branch will own the system and will support it once implemented.

The new system will be written in Microsoft .NET technology, a flexible internet-based environment that takes full advantage of current development and deployment methodologies. The new system will be centrally hosted by JIS in a secure environment and deployed to courts over statewide communication network. This will allow trial courts to forego having to purchase a server and software licenses. Central hosting will allow JIS to deploy updates and enhancements easily and place fewer burdens on court personnel.

The State Court Administrative Office is funding this multi-year project through a combination of the State Judicial Technology Improvement Fund (JTIF), user fees paid by current JIS users and by partnerships with several trial courts willing to invest in development in return for having a strategic role in the project and serving as the initial courts implemented.

Current Project Status

The process of developing the new system began in early 2007 with a 4-month analysis phase, which focused on documenting the business flows, processes and requirements at a high level for Michigan trial court's. This phase was completed in the summer 2007 and produced a set of documents that will be the basis for the detailed project strategy as well as a firm cost of the project. Contract negotiations continued into the fall resulting in a firm commitment by SCAO and Unisys in October 2008. At this point, SCAO also received a firm commitment from Washtenaw and Berrien counties to be partner courts. These counties will not only help fund the project but will also be actively involved in all phases of development. They will serve as the pilot courts and be first in line for full implementation.

The first phase of the project began in earnest in January 2008. The focus of this first phase is to design and build the Core functionality that will be used by all courts, such as calendaring and judicial assignment, as well as all of the Civil functions. This phase will take approximately 18 months. The project is using an iterative and incremental approach to Design, Build and Test. Essentially, the system will be developed in small pieces that will be delivered frequently to a "playpen" environment that will then be reviewed by members of the project

team in order to review and provide feedback to the appropriate team to ensure that the final system meets overall expectations.

At this point multiple project teams are fully operational. These teams include Business Analysis, Data Migration, Architecture/Technical and Testing and consist of members from JIS, Unisys, Berrien County and Washtenaw County. Unisys has not only brought a full management and business analysis team to the Hall of Justice but has also formed a technical development team, consisting of 9 members on-site at the Hall of Justice and 2 located in Western Australia.

Milestones Achieved

The Business Analysis team has completed elaborating the business use cases for package one and working on package two of the five package civil phase. The Data Migration team is responsible for migrating data from current JIS and legacy systems to the new system and has completed the design and development of the "pilot" migration files that will be used to move data to the new system.   They are also currently analyzing the requirements for the LEIN interface for phase 1. The Architecture/Technical team has been analyzing bandwidth required for the data communication network between courts and the Hall of Justice and have been focusing on printing and reporting requirements. The project management team has also developed a risk mitigation plan during the first few months of the project in order to identify and mitigate potential risks that might cause delays or increased expense. This plan will be continually reviewed and updated.

We will be providing you updates on the Next Generation project on a regular basis via memos and, eventually, a project website.